



MONTGOMERY COUNTY GOVERNMENT

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COORDINATING COUNCIL

2011 ANNUAL REPORT



MISSION

- ♦ *To reduce the incidence of domestic violence and create a safe community for families to live free of abuse.*

SEPTEMBER 15, 2011



MEMBERSHIP EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

THE HONORABLE PHIL ANDREWS
COUNCILMEMBER
MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL

THE HONORABLE MARIELSA BERNARD
ASSOCIATE JUDGE
CIRCUIT COURT FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY
FOR THE HONORABLE
JOHN W. DEBELIUS III
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE
CIRCUIT COURT FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY

SHIRLEY BRANDMAN
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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DEPUTY STATE'S ATTORNEY
FOR JOHN J. MCCARTHY
MONTGOMERY COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY

DREW TRACY
ASSISTANT CHIEF OF POLICE
FOR J. THOMAS MANGER, CHIEF
MONTGOMERY COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF POLICE

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COORDINATOR
FOR DARREN M. POPKIN, SHERIFF
MONTGOMERY COUNTY OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

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PRE-TRIAL SERVICES
FOR ARTHUR M. WALLENSTEIN,
DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION AND
REHABILITATION

DUDLEY WARNER
SENIOR ADMINISTRATOR
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND CRISIS SERVICES
FOR UMA AHLUWALIA, DIRECTOR
MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

THE HONORABLE EUGENE WOLFE
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE
DISTRICT COURT OF MARYLAND FOR
MONTGOMERY COUNTY

VACANT
COMMISSIONER
FOR JUDITH VAUGHAN-PRATHER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
MONTGOMERY COUNTY
COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

PUBLIC MEMBERS

BERNARD AUCHTER
VICE CHAIR, DVCC
COMMUNITY MEMBER

GLENNA BOAS
STUDENT MEMBER

DOROTHY FAIT, ESQ.
COMMUNITY MEMBER
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DIANE HAYES
COMMUNITY MEMBER

RESA LEVY
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STAFF

CYNTHIA MOGEL *OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF*



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COORDINATING COUNCIL INFORMATION

TERM OF SERVICE

There are seventeen voting members of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council who serve without compensation and are appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. Five are Ex-Officio members who serve at the request of the County Executive: the Administrative Judge of the Circuit Court; the Administrative Judge of the District Court; the Sheriff; the State's Attorney; and the Regional Administrator for the Maryland Division of Parole and Probation. There are five Ex-Officio members who are appointed by the County Executive: a member of the County Council, the Directors of the Departments of Correction and Rehabilitation; Health and Human Services; Police; Commission for Women; and Montgomery County Public School, Board of Education. In addition, there are five members of the general public appointed by the County Executive for renewable three year terms, one of whom is an attorney representing domestic violence victims, and four who have a demonstrated interest in domestic violence issues, including at least one who is a survivor of domestic violence. In 2010 the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council's code pertaining to membership was amended to add a student member. The student member is a high school junior or senior who is appointed to serve a one year term which can be renewed for one additional year.



SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

The Domestic Violence Coordinating Council meets bi-monthly on the second Thursday of the month and has met thirty-two times since September 2006. Meetings are open to the public.

LEADERSHIP

In November 2009 the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council elected as its Chair, Hannah Sassoon, Domestic Violence Coordinator, representing the Office of the Sheriff and as Vice Chair, Bernard Auchter, Community Member. Ms. Sassoon and Mr. Auchter continued to serve in those leadership roles during the past year.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the fifth year since its creation, the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council has advanced its mission of reducing the incidence of domestic violence and creating a safe community where families are free of abuse. In 2010-2011 the four committees, Victim Services, Education and Outreach, Legislative and Policy Planning and Offender Treatment Program and Policy, have each identified focus areas and made progress on executing recommendations from the previous report. This report summarizes the accomplishments of the past year, makes recommendations for the next and submits an action plan for each proposal.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ◆ Installation and full operation of the video conferencing services at the FJC;
- ◆ Implementation of the Avon Foundation Self-Sufficiency Empowerment Grant at the FJC;
- ◆ Coordination with the Family Justice Center Foundation, Inc. for the 1st Annual FJC Foundation Benefit held October 3, 2010;
- ◆ Collaboration with University of Maryland on Internship Program at the FJC;
- ◆ Continuation of the joint Montgomery County FJC and FJC Foundation quarterly newsletter;
- ◆ Augmentation of on-site agency partnerships at the FJC to include Career Catchers, the Maryland Division of Parole and Probation and Montgomery County's Department of Correction's Pre-trial Supervision Unit;
- ◆ Continuation of partnerships with Catholic Charities, House of Ruth, MD counselors, Interfaith Community Against Domestic Violence Chaplains and MCPD on-site detective;
- ◆ Receipt of a Verizon Grant for Forensic Interview equipment at the FJC through the Family Justice Center Foundation;
- ◆ Coordination of FJC training in June, 2011 for ten new volunteers;
- ◆ Coordination of the Montgomery Bar Associations Toy and Gift Card Holiday Drive to benefit FJC clients and their children;
- ◆ Participation in Law Day, April 2011 to promote awareness of the FJC among attorneys practicing in Montgomery County;
- ◆ Participation in a Divorce Roundtable discussion in April, 2011 to promote awareness of the FJC;
- ◆ Presentation to the Montgomery County, Maryland Inns of Court AIC in September, 2011 to promote awareness of the FJC and FJC Foundation, Inc.;
- ◆ Coordination of outreach about the FJC to the Association of Mid-Atlantic Professionals;
- ◆ Partnership with the University of Maryland to create a database for the FJC;
- ◆ Receipt of Panera Bread "Doughnation" grant through the Family Justice Center Foundation;
- ◆ Collaboration with multiple County agencies and community organizations for the 2nd Choose Respect Teen Dating Conference, April 2010;
- ◆ Coordination of the 2nd Choose Respect Teen Dating Public Service Announcement Contest, held in conjunction with the conference;
- ◆ Presentation of the Healthy Teen Dating Curriculum in Montgomery County Public Schools to over 1250 middle and high school students;
- ◆ Presentation of the Healthy Teen Dating Curriculum to MCPS Psychologists, Pupil Personnel Workers and School Counselors;
- ◆ Translation of the Healthy Teen Dating Curriculum to Spanish;



ACCOMPLISHMENTS CONTINUED

- ◆Presentation to the Criminal Justice Coordination Council regarding Break the Cycle's State Report Cards and to make recommendations for systemic change to better serve youth victims of teen dating violence;
- ◆Creation of a teen dating survey to distribute to teens in conjunction with the Healthy Teen Dating Presentations and Conference;
- ◆Addition of Youth member to the DVCC;
- ◆Presentations on legal rights and challenges facing abused women at the 3rd Annual Empowerment Workshop for African Women in October 2010;
- ◆Presentation of the Healthy Teen Dating Curriculum to various youth groups in the community to include, MC Street Outreach Network, Waxter Detention Center, Crittenton Services SNEAKERS Program, Community Preservation and Development Corporation Mentoring Group, National Center for Children and Families Adolescent Program, and Parenting Teens at the ICAP Conference;
- ◆Presentation of the Healthy Teen Dating Curriculum to nurses at Community Health Centers and to staff at the Montgomery County Correctional Facility to promote awareness of the presentation and services for victims;
- ◆Creation of a Choose Respect Montgomery Teen Dating Facebook page;
- ◆Coordination of dedicated domestic violence agents to the Maryland Division of Parole and Probation;
- ◆Coordination of presentations from Prince George's County Adam's House and J&E Associates to explore best practices in offender treatment;
- ◆Presentation of the Healthy Teen Dating Curriculum to staff at County Health Clinics and the Montgomery County Correction Facility to promote awareness of the curriculum;
- ◆Continuation and evaluation of Lethality Assessment Protocol (LAP) throughout Montgomery County;
- ◆Ongoing recruitment of attorneys for the Pro Bono Lawyers Initiative Program to refer domestic violence victims to pro bono attorneys for representation at protective order hearings;
- ◆Ongoing distribution of Spanish and English FJC Police Cards for officers and deputies to give to victims when they respond to domestic violence calls and Interim Orders;
- ◆Ongoing distribution of FJC brochures in English and Spanish to public and community partners;
- ◆Collaboration with the Office of Intergovernmental Relations and the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence on numerous bills in the 2011 Maryland General Assembly including the two listed below that will take effect October 1, 2011:

HB 667/SB 342 ▪ Peace Orders – Extension of Duration

This legislation would allow a judge the discretion to grant an extension of a peace order for an additional six months after a hearing.

HB 510 ▪ Criminal Law –Peace Orders, Stalking and Harassment - Penalties

This bill would add a penalty for a second or subsequent offense of failure to comply with a peace order, a penalty for a second or subsequent offense for harassment and redefines stalking to include communication that causes mental distress.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEXT YEAR:

Collaboration among FJC agency partners, FJC Foundation and community volunteers for ongoing sustainability and effective operation of the Montgomery County Family Justice Center;

Expansion of video conference services at the FJC;

Ongoing collaboration with county agencies, organizations and schools to increase awareness and prevention of teen dating violence, and;

Creation of a coordinated response to address the issue of teen dating violence.





VICTIM SERVICES COMMITTEE

CHAIR: HANNAH SASSOON

The Victim Services Committee has been actively collaborating with FJC agency partners, FJC Foundation and community volunteers for ongoing sustainability and effective operation of the FJC. Primary objectives successfully achieved in the previous year are outlined below and include, the addition of video conferencing, expansion of services at the FJC, ongoing sustainability of the FJC through the strengthening of partnerships and community support, as well as outreach to the community regarding FJC services.

FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER (FJC)

Since opening its doors in April 2009, approximately three-thousand victims representing over one hundred different countries of origin have sought services at the Montgomery County FJC with the goal of ending domestic violence in their lives. Seventy Family Justice Centers currently exist in the United States. There are ten international Family Justice Centers and another one hundred thirty-nine Centers are in development worldwide. Family Justice Centers are recognized nationally by the law enforcement, medical and mental health communities as a “best-practice” for responding to victims of domestic violence. Domestic violence victims who come to the FJC will be able to receive a broad array of critical Montgomery County services. These services include law enforcement intervention in the form of individualized, comprehensive safety plans; assistance with the filing of protective orders and navigating the court system; including specific programs available to immigrant victims under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA); counseling for victims and their children in both individual and group settings; employment assistance program; on-site child care services to support victims through the intake and legal process; and help with obtaining basic needs, such as shelter, food, housing, and transportation often all lost to victims and their families forced to flee their homes.

The Montgomery County FJC opened over two years ago with three primary on-site County agencies to include the State’s Attorney’s Office, Montgomery County Department Health and Human Services and the Sheriff’s Office. Catholic Charities, House of Ruth Maryland (HRM), Interfaith Community Against Domestic Violence and Montgomery County Police Department were added in the first year and continue to provide specialized services to FJC clients. To further meet the needs of victims the FJC has expanded its on-site services. This increase of services include the addition Career Catchers to offer victims of domestic violence support as they move forward to financial self-sufficiency and empowerment and personnel from the Montgomery County Department of Correction and Rehabilitation and the Maryland Division of Parole and Probation to collaborate closely with the State’s Attorney’s Office about offender cases and accountability.

To further augment client services at the FJC, volunteers are regularly recruited and trained to assist with direct services child care, intake and receptionist duties. In June, 2011 ten new volunteers, including several college students participated in over 20 hours of intensive FJC training. The FJC’s partnership with the intern program at the University of Maryland was also very successful its first year. The internship program that was established in August, 2010, is ongoing.

The members from the Victim Services Committee also work jointly with the Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation (MCFJC), whose mission is to support the charitable and educational activities of the Montgomery County Family Justice Center. The MCFJC, with nine board members and a five member advisory board have been instrumental in raising community awareness and support for the FJC. The Foundation continues to work on four primary initiatives, to include the Lawyer’s Initiative, the



Business Initiative, the Community Initiative and the FJC Foundation Annual Benefit.

The Lawyer's Initiative, organized by FJC Foundation Vice President and Secretary Donna Rismiller, is a collaborative effort between the Foundation and the HRM to provide pro bono or lo bono representation for Family Justice Center clients. The initiative served many victims in the previous year in addition to recruiting additional attorneys. The Business Initiative led by FJC board members, Lewis Selis and David Belkin is tasked with engaging the businesses community and garnering their support of the FJC. Recently they coordinated outreach about the FJC to the Association of Mid-Atlantic Professionals and arranged weekly deliveries to the FJC of unsold bakery goods from Panera Bread. The Community Initiative, Chaired by MCFJC President, Tom Degonia is focused on raising public awareness of the FJC and to ensure that those most at risk have the information they need to access the services of the FJC. The 1st Annual FJC Foundation Benefit held October 3, 2010 was a huge success with over 250 supporters in attendance and close to \$100,000.00 raised to help sustain services at the FJC. The Benefit Committee led by Benefit Chair Catherine Leggett is the largest fundraising event for the Foundation. The 2nd Annual MCFJC Foundation Benefit will be held October 2, 2011.

VIDEO CONFERENCING

As a result of productive coordination between the Victim Services Committee, local court personnel and information and technology staff video conferencing of ex-parte temporary protective orders between the Montgomery County Family Justice Center and the District and Circuit Courts in Montgomery County began in December 2010. This effort follows the issuance of Chief Judge Robert M. Bell's, May, 2009 Administrative Order permitting the use of video conferencing for ex-parte, temporary Protective Orders.

The addition of the video conferencing at the FJC allows victims of domestic violence seeking services to complete a petition and obtain a temporary order from a judge in the District or Circuit Courts without leaving the safety of the FJC. Furthermore video conferencing at the FJC allows victims to seek critical services while awaiting a judge's review of their petitions. Their children are not exposed to testimony and have the benefit of remaining in the FJC play area while the temporary hearing is conducted. This double benefit helps to ease the stress on children and reduces the disruption often caused by children in the courtroom. While video conferencing also gives the courts greater flexibility with scheduling cases, it is the comfort, convenience and sense of privacy that the clients find appealing. In the nine months since the service has been operational one hundred twenty (120) petitioners have utilized the video conferencing services at the FJC.

EMPOWERMENT AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY SERVICES

Due to a generous grant from the Avon Foundation, the Montgomery County Family Justice Center has been able to partner with Career Catchers, a local nonprofit organization, to offer victims of domestic violence support as they move forward to financial self-sufficiency and empowerment.

All too often victims of domestic violence who come to the MCFJC express feelings of being trapped in an abusive relationship because their children depend on the abusive partner for economic survival. Additionally, a victim's lack of economic stability may increase the likelihood of a return to the abuser or lead to homelessness. The Avon Empowerment Self-Sufficiency Program addresses these issues.

Career Catchers, under the leadership of two experienced employment specialists, launched the self-sufficiency program at the FJC in January, 2011. In the first six months 51 clients of various age, race and



citizenship status received services in the program. All clients in the program learn how to prepare a resume, write cover letters and thank you notes, network and present themselves in interviews. They learn to evaluate job descriptions, decide its appropriateness for their background and needs, and revise their resume and cover letter to highlight their qualifications. More importantly, they learn to assess and take pride in their past work experiences and to see how the skills they've acquired are transferable to new opportunities. In the first six months, the program has helped about 10 clients start new jobs and 22 clients entered some sort of job readiness training.

OUTREACH TO THE CITIZENS OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

To help ensure that the citizens of Montgomery County are aware of the Center and the services offered, the Victim Services Committee in collaboration with the FJC Foundation continued to distribute the FJC brochures and FJC Police Cards. Both are available in English and Spanish. The brochures include specific information regarding eligibility for services at the FJC, location, hours of operation, as well as available services. The police cards the size of business cards have been widely distributed to all district stations within the Montgomery County Police Department and deputies within the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office. When officers respond to a domestic violence call they provide the card containing pertinent information about the FJC to the identified victim and let them know that they can walk-in to the FJC for further assessment and services.

In addition to the business cards, the Victim Services Committee along with the FJC Foundation created a quarterly newsletter. The newsletter first published in October 2009, continues to be produced and keeps FJC partners and community supporters aware of all FJC events, progress at the Center and to recognize those who have made a special contribution to the Center.

Direct outreach through participation in the Montgomery County Bar Association's Law Day Divorce Roundtable discussion has also been very effective with promoting awareness of the FJC to local attorneys.

FORENSIC INTERVIEW SERVICES

In August, 2011 the Victim Services Committee in collaboration with the Family Justice Center Foundation received a grant from Verizon for the purchase of forensic video equipment. This high tech equipment will be installed in client meeting rooms at the FJC and provide a greatly needed expansion of services. The forensic interview equipment will be a welcome addition at the FJC because it will promote victim safety and offender accountability by allowing detectives and prosecutors to conduct timely interviews and gather evidence in domestic violence cases and thereby strengthen the prosecution of cases. Domestic violence victims and witnesses will also have the benefit of meeting with detectives in a safe and comfortable environment when they present for services at the FJC. The use of video evidence in court is also favorable because it decreases the probability of misinterpretation and incorrect paraphrasing. The Victim Services Committee, FJC partners and the FJC Foundation plan to work together in the next few months to purchase and install the video equipment.



EDUCATION AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE

CHAIR: DONNA RISMILLER

The Education and Outreach Committee has continued to focus on its teen dating violence prevention initiative during the past year. This initiative was renamed this year to Choose Respect Montgomery and includes three primary activities: the conference, the public service announcement contest and the healthy teen dating curriculum. These activities in addition to the collaboration efforts with the Department of Juvenile Services to meet the needs of teen dating violence victims are listed below.

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE PREVENTION

CHOOSE RESPECT MONTGOMERY TEEN DATING CONFERENCE

On April 9, 2011, the DVCC's Education and Outreach Committee, in partnership with the Takoma Park/ Silver Spring Campus of Montgomery College and numerous County agencies and community organizations, hosted the 2nd Annual Choose Respect Montgomery Teen Dating Conference for local teens and their parents. Choose Respect Montgomery is organized with the goal of promoting respect in dating relationships and raising the community's awareness about the prevalence of teen dating violence. Approximately 160 teens, parents and youth workers attended the one day conference and participated in educational workshops on topics related to healthy and unhealthy teen dating behaviors and the misuse of technology.

The event commenced with welcoming messages from the Honorable Marielsa Bernard and Donna Rismiller followed by a presentation of a Teen Dating Violence Proclamation to the DVCC by Councilmember Phil Andrews. Attendees were then entertained by City at Peace DC, a performing arts youth development organization that tackles teen issues through creative acting performances. Their act was outstanding and truly current as it brought attention to the conflict teens encounter with regard to abuse and control through technology.

In the afternoon inspirational speakers Bill Mitchell from the Kristin Mitchell Foundation and Ana Valdez, effectively conveyed through their personal stories the devastating impact that teen dating violence has had in their lives. Bill Mitchell, showed a touching video of his daughter Kristin and spoke of his daughter's abusive relationship that ended in her murder, just after her college graduation. Ana Valdez shared her poem "Angels" which depicts her later teen years in a severely abusive relationship with the father of her children that could have ended in her death. Her poem credits several individuals or "Angels" who were there at just the right time to prevent that fatal outcome.

Following the afternoon workshops, the conference ended with the appearance of Hot 99.5 DJ Toby Knapp who wrapped up the day by handing out raffle prizes and reinforcing the message that teens have the power to "Choose Respect" in their relationships.



The poster pictured above was displayed around the community and in schools to promote awareness of the Choose Respect Montgomery Teen Dating Conference.



Based on participant surveys Choose Respect continues to be well received by both parents and teens. Parents report that they are enlightened about the prevalence of an issue that they otherwise did not know existed. Teens reported recognizing and thinking about the respect that they deserve in their relationships. The Education and Outreach Committee is already in the process of planning the 3rd Annual Choose Respect Conference. It is scheduled for March 24, 2012 at the Takoma Park/ Silver Spring Campus of Montgomery College.

CHOOSE RESPECT MONTGOMERY PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT CONTEST



Poster inviting all middle and high school students to participated in the PSA contest..

For the second consecutive year the DVCC sponsored the Teen Dating Public Service Announcement Contest for local teens. The contest is intended to evoke teens' interest, awareness and perspective on the issue of teen dating violence. The contest challenges them to submit a brief video production that focuses on a topic related to teen dating violence. They are also asked to include resource information such as the number to a local or national helpline. Prizes include a scholarship, recognition for their school or community group and the opportunity to have their production broadcast locally.

This year the committee did not receive any submissions. The DVCC and its partners believe the contest provides a worthwhile opportunity for teens and plans to sponsor the contest in 2012. The upcoming contest will be held in recognition of National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month scheduled for February, 2012. Entries will be accepted in English and Spanish and cash prizes will be awarded to the 1st and 2nd place winners in each category in addition to the opportunity to have the winning production locally broadcast. The sponsoring school, youth group, teacher or adult leader will also receive recognition. Outreach about the 2012 PSA contest to schools, media specialist and youth groups is already underway.

CHOOSE RESPECT MONTGOMERY HEALTHY TEEN DATING CURRICULUM

Choose Respect Montgomery Healthy Teen Dating Curriculum was developed by the Education and Outreach Committee in 2009 as a tool to educate teens about components of both healthy and unhealthy relationships, roles in abusive relationships, local and national help resources and how to speak out against abuse. Following its approval by the County's Citizens Advisory Council on School Health and Human Development in April 2010 the Education and Outreach Committee made a considerable effort to promote awareness of the presentation among Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) personnel and community groups. Choose Respect Montgomery Curriculum was presented during the fall of 2010 to MCPS school psychologists, pupil personnel workers and school counselors. School staff was encouraged to contact the DVCC after obtaining approval from their principal to coordinate a presentation.

In its first year since implementation the committee successfully reached over 1250 MCPS middle and high school students. Additional presentations occurred with numerous community youth groups including MC Street Outreach Network, Waxter Detention Center, Crittenton Services SNEAKERS Program, Community Preservation and Development Corporation Mentoring Group, National Center for Children and Families Adolescent Program, and Parenting Teens at the ICAP Conference.



In order to also educate Latino students about healthy dating practices the presentation was translated to Spanish and includes videos in Spanish as a visual enhancement tool of the message. Choose Respect Montgomery Curriculum was improved this past year to include general information about obtaining civil protection through a peace order. Prior to viewing the presentation teens are also given a brief survey developed in partnership with the Healthy Teen Dating Task Force. This survey will provide a glimpse into the attitudes, perceptions and experiences local teens have with regard to teen dating violence.

With the addition of a youth member to the DVCC this year the Education and Outreach Committee plans to partner with additional schools and community groups and continue to present the Choose Respect Montgomery Curriculum to more teens in the coming year.

INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION TO IMPROVE SERVICES FOR VICTIMS OF DATING VIOLENCE

Recognizing that teens in abusive relationships in many states including Maryland do not have the same legal protections or services that adult victims receive, the Education and Outreach Committee concentrated a significant amount of attention in the past year on garnering support for change and creating a plan for a more coordinated response to teens that file for protection. This effort initiated with a close examination of Break the Cycles 2010 State Report Card, which is a report that designates a grade for each state based on its response to teen dating violence. For 2010 Maryland received a C. Break the Cycle's recommendations for change in Maryland include allowing minors to petition for peace order and protection order relief on their own behalf and to explicitly describe the procedure for doing so, to allow victims of intimate partner harassment to access protective orders and to allow minors to access all sensitive services without parental involvement. Particular consideration was also paid to the practices of states that received an A. Many of those states (Illinois, Washington DC, California, New Hampshire and Rhode Island) permit teens to file orders in the same court as adult victims and some have limited parental involvement and notification requirements. Illinois, Rhode Island, and Washington also require some form of dating violence instruction in middle and high schools.

The committee's intervention to improve Maryland's response to teen dating violence through legislative change was initiated this year by submitting ideas to the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV). This practice will be ongoing. Until legislative changes are in place the committee has proposed improved collaboration among key agencies (Montgomery County Sheriff's Office and State's Attorney's Office, Montgomery County Public Schools and Maryland Department of Juvenile Services) that work with teen victims. In the next few months these agencies will work in partnership to address issues facing teen victims in the County.





LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY PLANNING COMMITTEE

CHAIR: DOROTHY FAIT

The Legislative and Policy Planning Committee in 2010-2011 has focused on two primary initiatives: the Lethality Assessment Protocol and domestic violence related legislation. The multiple activities and accomplishments of this committee are listed below and primarily include ongoing implementation and evaluation of the Lethality Assessment Protocol (LAP) and coordination with the Office of Intergovernmental Relations and the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence on domestic violence related legislation in the general assembly.

LETHALITY ASSESSMENT AND PROTOCOL (LAP)

In August 2008 the Montgomery County Department of Police, Office of the Sheriff and municipal police departments implemented LAP, a danger assessment tool for officers to utilize when they respond to domestic violence calls. Deputies in the Sheriff's Office also use the LAP in cases where the victim files for an Interim protective order and there was no police intervention. The purpose of the Lethality Assessment Protocol is to encourage those victims at the greatest risk of harm to access domestic violence services.

The protocol requires officers to ask the victim of an intimate partner assault a series of 11 questions at the scene of an incident. If the victim answers in the affirmative to 4 of the questions or in the affirmative to one of the 3 "automatic trigger" questions, or if the officer has concerns based on his/her professional experience, the victim is screened into the protocol. The officer then advises the victim of the high danger assessment and will contact the Crisis Center hotline and attempt to connect the victim with a counselor for safety planning.

Patrol officers have embraced the LAP in Montgomery County. It provides them with a useful tool and direction when responding to often difficult domestic violence calls. Quarterly reports are prepared by participating Maryland jurisdictions which show the ratio between the number of victims who complete a LAP survey and talk with a crisis counselor.

The Family Crimes Division (FCD) of the Montgomery County Police Department has maintained the records and collected all pertinent data from LAP surveys conducted by Montgomery County Police Department and Rockville, Takoma Park, Chevy Chase and Gaithersburg City Police Departments. For the period July 2010 to March 2011, 747 LAP surveys were completed by these law enforcement offices. Of the victims surveyed, 462 were considered high risk by either screening in "according to protocol" or based on officers' belief. Over one half, 245, of those high risk victims were put in direct contact with a counselor at the Abused Persons Program (APP) or the Crisis Center. A total of 319, or sixty-nine percent of high risk victims became aware of the County's domestic violence services or were willing to speak to a counselor as a result of the LAP.

LAP data were also collected from APP to determine the number of domestic violence victims that followed up with counseling services, whether it is for telephone crisis counseling, in-person safety planning or counseling sessions. The statistics indicate a good number have continued in counseling and/or working with APP victim advocates on safety planning and legal processes. Most of these clients would not have come to the program without this protocol.



LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

The Domestic Violence Coordinating Council worked with the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence and the Office of Intergovernmental Relations in support of the 2011 domestic violence legislative agenda in the General Assembly in Annapolis.

The following is a summary of domestic violence legislation that passed and will take effect October 1, 2011:

HB 667/SB 342 ▪ Peace Orders – Extension of Duration

This legislation would allow a judge the discretion to grant an extension of a peace order for an additional six months after a hearing.

HB 510 ▪ Criminal Law –Peace Orders, Stalking and Harassment - Penalties

This bill would add a penalty for a second or subsequent offense of failure to comply with a peace order, a penalty for a second or subsequent offense for harassment and redefines stalking to include communication that causes mental distress.





OFFENDER TREATMENT PROGRAM AND POLICY COMMITTEE

The Offender Treatment Program and Policy Committee recently formed within the DVCC and includes members from various County agencies that focus on domestic violence offender intervention. The committee's accomplishments and identified goals for the upcoming year are outlined below.

OFFENDER ACCOUNTABILITY

EXPLORATION OF OFFENDER TREATMENT PROGRAMS

During the previous year, in an effort to explore best practices in offender treatment members invited staff from both Adam's House and J & E Associates to DVCC meetings to present information regarding their programs. Adam's House operates through the Prince George's County Health Department and provides offender treatment and case management of violent youth offenders in tandem with the Department of Juvenile Services. They focus on the clients' health, emotional and social needs as well as work to instill values.

J & E Associates has received certification through the Governor's Family Violence Council and has conducted many of the offender treatment groups in Montgomery County. The primary mission of their treatment program is to promote victim safety, promote changes in attitudes and behavior by perpetrators of domestic violence and to create zero tolerance for intimate partner violence in the community. In order to alleviate the wait list for court ordered offenders they reduced their program from 26 weeks to 22 weeks. Fifty-five percent of their clients complete the program, which is high compared to the national average. Eighty percent of those who complete the program self report no violence in their relationships.

COLLABORATION TO INCREASE OFFENDER ACCOUNTABILITY

One method to increase offender accountability was accomplished by the committee members this year when the Maryland Division of Parole and Probation implemented the return to specialized domestic violence agents. These agents are located at each of the County's probation offices and supervise offenders that have been convicted of domestic violence related crimes. They are familiar with the dynamics of domestic violence and work closely with other offender and victim treatment personnel in the county to coordinate the best course of treatment for the offender, track compliance of offenders and address victim safety issues.

The committee through partnership with the victim services committee arranged for agents from both the Maryland Division of Parole and Probation and the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation Pre-Trial Supervision Unit (PTSU) to be located at the FJC one day per week. The agents at the FJC have access to case files from the prosecutors, meet with the legal assistants, and review the evidence such as photos to get a fuller picture of the incident. They also frequently work concurrently with the State's Attorney's Office (SAO) to file for violations of release conditions, giving judges more complete information on which to base a decision. This on-site working relationship allows monitoring from arrest through disposition and has increased communication between PTSU, SAO and P&P.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT YEAR

Recommendation #1 Collaboration among County Government, FJC agency partners, FJC Foundation and community volunteers for ongoing sustainability and effective operation of the Montgomery County Family Justice Center

Since April 2009, nearly 3000 victims of domestic violence received services at the FJC from on-site partners. The commitment of County Government, the MCFJC Foundation and the community in general has significantly maximized the Center's success in serving some of the County's most vulnerable citizens.

The MCFJC Foundation continues to work in close association with the DVCC for ongoing sustainability of the Center. The Foundation's mission is to support the charitable and educational activities of the FJC. The Foundation's 1st Annual Benefit titled, Keeping Them Safe, Giving them Hope and a New Start, on October 3, 2010 raised approximately \$100,000.00. It is the Foundation's annual fundraising event of the year and aims to raise awareness and resources for the ongoing support of the center. The Lawyers, Business and Community Initiatives of the MCFJC Foundation are well established and assist victims by providing pro bono or lo bono legal services, support from the local businesses and the community, respectively.

Ancillary and vital support for the daily operation of the FJC has come from a core group of volunteers committed to helping with various duties at the FJC. The FJC partners are committed to ongoing recruitment of qualified volunteers and will also continue to collaborate with the University of Maryland on an internship program.

Action Plan:

The Domestic Violence Coordinating Council and FJC partners will continue to collaborate with the FJC Foundation in order to sustain the operation of the Center, increase awareness of domestic violence assistance for victims and help families maintain violence free homes.

The DVCC and FJC partners will maintain the recruitment of qualified and diverse volunteers and interns to assist with the daily operation of the FJC.

Recommendation #2 Expansion of video conferencing services at the FJC

Video Conferencing services at the FJC began in December 2010. In the nine months since it has been available for victims seeking temporary orders of protection, one hundred twenty (120) video conferencing hearings have occurred. A majority of victims who receive this service are referred to the FJC by the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD). The FJC has the equipment and the ability to serve more victims in this capacity but believes there is limited awareness in the community about this newer process of obtaining temporary relief.

The DVCC also recognizes that the utilization of video conferencing services can also be broadened to enhance a client's communication with other County agencies, such as various departments within Health and Human Services (HHS). With the installation of video conferencing equipment at the Montgomery County Crisis Center located on Piccard Drive in Rockville, clients who need to consult with a member of the Crisis Center team, child welfare or other agency located there will be able to do so without leaving the comfort and safety of the FJC.

Action Plan:

The Domestic Violence Coordinating Council and FJC partners plan in the upcoming year to expand the use of video conferencing at the FJC by 1) increasing the community's awareness of the video conferencing



services a the FJC and 2) using video conferencing to connect FJC clients to HHS staff.

Recommendation #3 Ongoing collaboration with county agencies, organizations and schools to increase awareness and prevention of teen dating violence

Research shows that as many as one in three teens will experience dating violence and two-thirds of them will never report it. According to the U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women, this figure exceeds victimization rates for other types of violence impacting youth. Dating violence is not only dangerous, but it can have a long-term impact on the emotional and physical health of teen victims with consequences that follow into their adult lives. Teens that experience physical violence in dating relationships are more likely to be abusers of drugs and alcohol, attempt suicide, and carry patterns of abuse into future relationships.

Teens seeking to end an abusive relationship often confront strong social and peer pressure barriers which can complicate the ability of the criminal justice system to investigate and prosecute dating violence cases. In some cases, teens may believe that abuse or intimidation are acceptable behaviors in their personal relationships. Additionally, socio-cultural and economic barriers in underserved communities make it difficult for service providers and other professionals to identify and assist victims of these crimes.

The DVCC along with numerous community partners is committed to prevention through awareness and education to teens and their parents about the dangers of dating violence.

Action Plan:

The DVCC will continue to address this important issue of teen dating violence in the next year by coordinating with MCPS, County agencies and organizations on the Choose Respect Montgomery initiatives including the curriculum, PSA contest and the conference.





Recommendation #4 Creation of a coordinated response to address the issue of teen dating violence

Teen dating violence has been recognized as a serious public health issue by the Center for Disease Control. Adolescents in controlling or violent relationships may carry these dangerous and unhealthy patterns into future relationships, continuing the cycle of violence. Many youth in violent relationships are not aware of services or can not access them without parental consent. Most states, including Maryland do not provide the same legal protections or services for teen victims of dating violence that adult victims receive. Additionally, schools, law enforcement, prosecutors and juvenile service agencies do not have protocols in place for communicating and responding to incidents of teen dating violence.

Action Plan:

The DVCC will continue to work toward a collaborated community response among agencies that come in contact with victims of teen dating violence. These agencies will establish protocols that will direct the exchange of information between the agencies on matters of mutual interest and responsibility, in order to address teen dating violence in the community and reduce the risk of violence to the youth in Montgomery County.



MONTGOMERY COUNTY GOVERNMENT

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COORDINATING COUNCIL

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